

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: ASSERTIVE CONSTITUENCY ORGANIZATIONS.A SWORD
THAT CUTS TWO WAYS

REF: LONDON 11452

1. THE REG PRENTICE CASE, WHEREIN THE SECRETARY OF OVER-SEAS DEVELOPMENT'S CONSTITUENCY LABOR PARTY (CLP) ORGANIZATION VOTED TO OUST HIM AS ITS CANDIDATE IN THE NEXT ELECTION (REFTEL), HAS ATTRACTED INTENSE PUBLIC AND MEDIA ATTENTION, ESPECIALLY FROM RIGHT-WING SOURCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE LABOR PARTY. CONTROL OF PRENTICE'S CLP BY SMALL GROUP OF LEFTIST MILITANTS HAS BEEN STRESSED, WITH LITTLE MENTION BEING MADE OF PRENTICE'S VULNERABILITY RESULTING FROM HIS FAILURE TO KEEP IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH HIS CLP. HIS GOVERNMENTAL POSITION, OF COURSE, MAKES HIS PLIGHT PARTICULARLY LEWSWORTHY, AND HIS CONTINUING EFFORTS TO HAVE THE CLP DECISION REVERSED KEEP HIM IN THE NEWS. FACT IS, HOWEVER, THAT CLP DISSATISFACTION WITH SERVING MPS IS NOT PROBLEM UNIQUE TO RIGHT-WINGERS AND MODERATES, THOUGH SOME OF LABOR'S OPPONENTS WOULD LIKE PUBLIC TO BE-

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LIEVE THAT IS CASE.

2. SIMILAR SITUATION INVOLVING LEFT-WING BACKBENCH MP HAS GONE VIRTUALLY UNREPORTED BY MEDIA. JOHN LEE, MP FROM BIRMINGHAM, BARRISTER AND MEMBER OF TRIBUNE GROUP, WAS TOLD IN SEPTEMBER THAT HE WOULD NOT BE RENOMINATED BY CLP. THE REASON: POOR RELATIONS WITH CLP AND POOR SERVICE TO HIS CONSTITUENTS, NOT UNLIKE ROOT CAUSE OF PRENTICE'S DIFFICULTIES. UNLIKE PRENTICE, LEE (AGE 48) OPTED TO ACCEPT CLP DECISION AND ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO RETIRE FROM POLITICS.

3. THE CASE MF FRANK TOMNEY (LONDON, HAMMERSMITH), HOWEVER, HAS BEEN THE FOCUS OF PRESS, RADIO AND TV COVERAGE. A RIGHT-WING ACKBENCHER, HE IS IN TROUBLE WITH LEFT-LEANING CLP FMR POOR SERVICE TO CONSTITUENCY AND HIS STAND ON EC (HE WAS PRO-MARKETEER FROM STRONGLY ANTI-MARKET CONSTITUENCY), AND HIS FUTURE HAS YET TO BE DECIDED.

4. WHILE LEE CASE IS OBVIOUSLY NOT AS SIGNIFICANT OR AS NEWSWORTHY AS THAT OF PRENTICE, ATTENTION PAID TO TOMNEY'S DIFFICULTIES SEEMS TO ILLUSTRATE THAT MEDIA COVERAGE HAS LOT BEEN EVEN-HANDED. WE DO NOT MINIMIZE SIGNIFICANCE OF SMALL LEFTIST CLIQUE AND IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PRENTICE AFFAIR. BUT BY FOCUSING ON ONLY

PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT LESSON IN ALL THREE CASES:CLPS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY ASSERTIVE IN DEMANDING SERVICE FROM THEIR MPS, AND BOTH RIGHT- AND LEFT-WINGERS CAN RUN INTO DIFFICULTY WITH THEIR CLPS ON THAT ISSUE.

RICHARDSON

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